INTERVIEW WITH MRS. MILDRED AIKEN

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Conducted by:

Dr. James L. Dodson

--and--

Miss Kathryn Burmeister

INTERVIEW WITH: Mildred Aiken - 3/15/76

Dodson: I wonder if you would tell us Mrs. Aiken, your name, and where you were born, when you came to the Valley first, this sort of thing we would like to have as a sort of introduction to our tape.

Aiken: Okay, my name is Mildred Angelo Aiken. I came to Calif. in May of 1923.

Dodson: Where did you come from by the way?

Aiken: Indiana. A small town called Brasil, Indiana. Near Teriholden.

Dodson: What caused you to move to California?

Aiken: My father retired and that was what we people did in those days. You retired and came to California and have chickens and oranges and all that sort of thing.

Dodson: How old were you when you came?

Aiken: Four.

Dodson: Well I imagine you don't remember the Valley too well, then in 1923.

Aiken: Pretty much, yes.

Dodson: Can you tell us a little bit about your earliest recollections. What the Valley was like. I think you said there were orange groves, and that sort of thing.

Aiken: Orange groves, lemon groves, which is now right in town. And Sylmar had the largest olive grove in the world. Sylmar was only an olive grove and it was considered the largest in the world.

Dodson: I understand there is a family called the or named the family, who had been in that business for years. Did you know them?

Aiken: Oh yes, I knew them. I still do. In fact I saw one of the boys just the other day in the doctor's office.

Dodson: I see. Can you tell us about your earliest schooling years. What sort of schools there were. Whether they

Aiken: The same school that is over here. Morningside school, I started there in kindergarten.

Dodson: Is that right. Is it in the same building?

Aiken: The main building is still the same. The earthquake took down one building which was new when I was in the 5th grade I believe and it has been rebuilt but the main building is still there. Yeah.

Dodson: Do you have any idea when that building was put up, since it has been there at least since 1923.

Aiken: No I don't. No I have no idea really. I have no idea.

Dodson: How about the junior high and high school. Did you attend those also?

ken: Yes, when I went to San Fernando junior and senior high it was all in the same location, which is now the San Fernando junior high. And it is junior high only now. Then it was junior high and senior high. And students came from Newhall, Saugus, and that direction, from Sunland-Tujunga and LaCresenta and that direction, Sepulveda and that direction and of course, Sun Valley, Pacoima and all that direction. They were all bused into this school.

Dodson: I see and again we have the same building in use now that you went to junior high in.

Aiken: Well the auditorium is still there, but the administration building which was the pride and joy of the place the year I graduated was brand new was completely destroyed by the earthquake. And it had to be torn down. And have rebuilt considerable. I haven't gone over to see it. But it is looks very beautiful what they have done. So the last I know. The science building and the auditorium are the only buildings that are left. The rest have all been condemned.

Dodson: I see. Were they condemned on account of the earthquake then?

Aiken: Yes. I believe so. Most of them. Now the home economics building I am not sure. But the administration building was, yes.

odson: When we're talking about the earthquake to us that always means one particular earthquake, the one in 1971.

Aiken: Right. Absolutely. Never forget that one.

Dodson: You say you will never forget it. Would you tell us again, you did before I turned on the tape something about your recollections of it. We would like to record this because I think in the future people will be very much interested in this Sylmar earthquake. As it's come to be called.

Aiken: San Fernando.

Dodson: Yes. While its come to be called the Sylmar earthquake it certainly did hit alot of other communities. San Fernando and even the one where I live, LaCresenta.

Aiken: Well, San Fernando business district really took a beating. It was almost completely demolished. And we still have a vacant lot right in the center of town. You will notice when you drive through town.

Dodson: Can you tell us what happened to the San Fernando Mission.

Aiken: It had damage. Now I don't know exactly how much. But it has been repaired, I understand. I haven't gone down to see it. Or I didn't at the time, but I understand that it did have considerable damage. Not as much as the town did, believe me.

Dodson: I see, can you tell us about your house, your personal recollections of just what happened. The earthquake came about 6:00 a.m. did it not?

Aiken: Yes and no one was up, fortunately at our house. I had four grandchildren staying the night with me. And everything was beautiful the next morning, other than the mess. No hysteria, they weren't upset at all. My one little grandson, although he has big brown eyes, as we were going down to my daughters to see how they fared, his eyes kept getting bigger and bigger and bigger all the way down there because we had so much destruction. The streets were torn out, the houses flattened, the house next door to me, the garage was completely down on the ground and I had 150' brick wall around my place, that was down. Many, many cracks, broken gas lines, broken water pipes, we had a in my yard down on, I didn't know at the time, but it was on Glenoaks. I could see flames above the trees and found out later it was the gas line that was burning and it was burning and it burned for considerable length of time down here and the flames were shooting very high and we had no water to fight it with.

Dodson: You did not actually get any fire in your house as a result of the broken gas lines?

Aiken: No I was very fortunate. No I had a very good neighbor that came right over and turned off my gas.

Dodson: How long was it before your water was restored?

Aiken: Seems like an eternity. I couldn't tell exactly. But we got used to bathing in a teacup practically. That sort of thing we would go to the water trucks, take the big plastic containers, go to the water trucks and get them filled up.

Dodson: Can you describe what the streets looked like right after the earthquake?

Aiken: Well many of them had holes in them and many of them were up, oh maybe two or three feet in the air and it was very hazardous to drive, to drive anywhere you were never sure. One night, I was coming home and I was talking to some of the hardhats who were working. They worked 24 hours a day round and somebody came tearing down the street and he went right in the hole.

Dodson: Was the street in front of your house in a condition so that you could drive over it?

Aiken: Yes, I could. It was pretty rough but it was able to ride over it and my driveway, of course, was cracked and everything, but I could manage the drive out. It was all torn up later and completely pulled at both ends.

Dodson: I think you told us that you, were, hurt your feet in attempting to walk over it and then you, of all places, went to Olive View for first aid. Is that right?

Aiken: Right. I had never been to Olive View for first aid but my daughter and I were trying to figure what to do because it was still early in the morning and she said I should get my feet taken care of because I was bleeding all over the place and we were trying to decide where to go and somebody said how about Olive View, they have an Emergency up there, so we drove up to Olive View which was not the place to go that morning. It was unbelievable.

Dodson: Can you tell us what it looked like to you when you got there?

Aiken: Well I am sure you have seen pictures of it and they don't lie. I mean they were exactly like the pictures there. The only thing was patients walking down the street holding each other up, helping each other. I had someone on a flat on his back and another patient was pushing him and I don't know exactly where they were going, but they were going away from the main building that had the hospital , that had really collapsed and there was a helicopter that had just landed when we arrived and another one was hovering and so we decided that we would get out of their way. We weren't in any position to help them.

Dodson: Did the hospital look as though it had collapsed completely or were some parts of it standing?

Aiken: Oh yes, some of it was standing, the one whole section that we , it was quite amusing, there was a wheelchair hanging out the window or not the window but on the edge of a hall and it was just balanced there hanging and that was like there for, oh I don't know how long, and until they really managed to get most of the stuff out. I have pictures of that. It's all in books of course.

Dodson: Is that hospital completely abandoned now or are the remains still up there or just what is its situation?

Aiken: No they blasted the remains down. They did it in two different days. It was up there one time, my granddaughter wanted to see it. We went up and it was really amazing, they blasted the thing and, just poof, it was down that fast and just a cloud of dust that huge building.

Dodson: There's nothing there then where the hospital used to be.

Aiken: No. No. Nor at the veterans hospital. Most of those buildings are gone.

Dodson: I see. Kathy do you have any questions about the earthquake?

Kathy: Not about the earthquake, a little later I have some questions.

Dodson: Okay, well maybe you would like to ask them now.

Kathy: Well, what are some of your other recollections about the time that you have lived here, maybe the Valley during the depression.

Aiken: Well I'm ashamed to say I don't remember too much about the depression. I was one of the fortunate people that didn't have any problems. My lifestyle didn't change and I really couldn't say too much about it. I know people were having very difficult times and seeing newsreels at the theatres was about my limit to that because I really don't know too much about that. I know that there were very many people unemployed and actually hungry, but other than that I couldn't tell you because I am fortunate, I say I didn't have it first hand.

Kathy: Did you live on a ranch here?

Aiken: No. We had When we came to town my father bought some property with one small house on it and built another house and then they sold that and then built another home in the middle of the three lots and they were quite deep lots. It was about a half acre all together and we had chickens and all kinds of berries and all kinds of flowers, fruit trees, walnut trees, asparagus patch, oh all kinds of things, that's what he did and he just fooled around in the yard.

Dodson: Do you remember the time when you could look out into the Valley and look and there was nothing but land?

Aiken: Yes when, well, for quite a few years after we arrived my mother would, being an easterner, she liked canned fruit, peaches, apricots, we'd have special places we would go out on Sherman Way where they would grow these things and all of that was in chicken ranches and fruit orchards, that sort of thing. Not like it is today. We would quite often spend a Sunday just driving around and we would have special places where they would like to get, like apricots or peaches, so forth, and we would go out and buy them and bring them back and my mother would can them the following day.

Dodson: Were there many open places in the Valley then with orchards and things and that sort of thing?

Aiken: Yes, many. I remember when they opened the tunnel on Sepulveda going over the mountain, it was the tunnel they built up there by the top of the hill and you would go through the mountain I don't know if it is even still there. Over Sepulveda.

thy: Near Mullholland?

Aiken: I don't know exactly where the tunnel is, I don't know whether it is still there or not, since the freeways have been in. But I remember when it was brand new and the tunnel had just been finished. We went up there to go through it.

Dodson: Was that in the northern part of the Valley or southern part.

Aiken: Well, that was the end of Sepulveda where it goes over the mountains into West Los Angeles.

Kathy: I know where there is still a tunnel there now. Well, but it's at Mullholland.

Aiken: Is it at Mullholland? I don't recall, really. It was quite a tunnel. Duroon(?) leading up to the top.

Kathy: It is really more than that now.

Aiken: Well yes, now but for quite a while it was quite the place.

Dodson This was the part of the Valley that was settled first wasn't it out here in the Northern part?

Aiken: San Fernando yes, San Fernando was where the whole valley takes its name.

Dodson: Was there very much where Van Nuys and North Hollywood are now located when you came out?

Aiken: Well, North Hollywood was called Lankershim, and Van Nuys, well I know in high school they were our arch enemies in football. Oh, we had to beat Van Nuys always. And they were just little small towns, nothing spectacular.

Dodson: Do you remember the days the P E's ran through the Valley? The red cars?

Aiken: I rode them many times when I was going to College. Many times.

Dodson: Where did you go to college by the way?

Aiken: Los Angeles Junior College. Down on Vermont where U.C.L.A. used to be.

Kathy: Sure quite a trip to go.

Aiken: I only did that once a week. I lived with my sister who lived in the village.

Kathy: The village?

Aiken: Westwood village. I did not like those street cars. They would get out in the country here and they seemed like they were going so fast. And going around curves, I thought they were going to go over. They were weird.

Kathy: Were they connected to wires or were they on rails?

Aiken: Just like a street car. The red cars. They went into a terminal underground downtown Los Angeles.

Dodson: The subway terminal?

Aiken: Right.

Dodson: Can you remember the subway terminal Kathy?

Kathy: No, I never heard of it.

Dodson: What street was that on? What hill was the subway terminal on, do you recall?

Aiken: I'm not sure. I really don't remember. We didn't go too much. That's the only time. We usually drove in, the family, you know. We used to always go shopping in downtown L.A. because there were no shops in the Valley that we liked.

Dodson: Do you remember the coming of World War II and what the reaction of the Valley was to that?

Aiken: It was very wild. I was married at the time. I had a little girl at the time and another on the way. When that fateful Sunday came along and oh, yes, it was quite an experience. I mean war to me was something that I just got in on the tail end before I was a month old, when armistice was declared so I don't remember much about war until that time.

Dodson: Do you remember whether there was much excitement in the Valley on December 7, 1941 when the news of Pearl Harbor came?

Aiken: Yes, I was at home myself and in fact the whole family was at home. Of course, we were all concerned. I don't think we got the, really graphed immediately what it would mean. You know you don't really you just hear about it, the radio was on you heard it and you didn't realize at the moment just what it would do to your whole life. It would change your whole life, everyones'.

Dodson: I think that you mentioned to us that you were interested in the USO activities, can you describe some of that as it occurred here in the Valley?

Aiken: Well having two small children I really couldn't get too involved, but I did go occasionally to the USO. We would be hostesses down there and we used to go up to the Veterans hospital and have bingo parties and take cookies and sandwiches and we would go to the dances. This one group I was in we would go to dances. We went down to, down by San Diego, what is it the Marine base...?

Dodson: Pendleton?

Aiken: Pendleton to dance for the night and then we went up to the place where they were making the motion pictures with the C D 's and we went up there to dance one night. And that is just about it as far as I was concerned, because like I said, I had two small children and I really couldn't tear around too much on that.

Dodson: Were there many men in this particular area in the arm forces or were most of them further north for transhipment to the Pacific.

Aiken: We had, an army camp right here on Eighth Street.

Dodson: Oh, there was an army camp in the Valley?

Aiken: Right. We had one right here in town.

Dodson: That I didn't know. Can you tell us what its name was?

Aiken: No, I couldn't. I'm sorry I don't recall.

Dodson: Were many men stationed here then?

Aiken: I don't know how many. But there were quite a few. I know the town was full of them. Quite a lively town, yes.

Dodson: I can imagine, it probably was. You have given us a piece of information I don't think we knew that there was an army camp in the Valley during the war.

Aiken: Yes.

Dodson: Can you tell us about the armistice. What the reaction in the Valley was? How it was celebrated or commemorated or just what happened?

Aiken: Well, you're talking about VJ Day?

Dodson: Yes.

Aiken: Well, I had moved up to Northern California for a couple of years but I happened to be down here at the time that it happened. VJ Day and it was wild, absolutely wild. I don't think I could say anything else, it was just wild.

Dodson: Well, now those that listen to this tape a hundred years from now are going to want to know how wild it was and what happened.

Aiken: Celebration, everyone was celebrating like crazy. I know I had a very good friend, who was one of these very, very people, and man we had to call her husband to come get her, she had celebrated so much she couldn't even drive home. And it was like that all over town. It was really wild. All of the police were in force and all of the, they had police they would call in occasionally, volunteers, that sort of thing and they were all out in the streets because it was a wild night in town. Believe me.

Dodson: What would you regard as the most interesting thing that happened in the history of the Valley since you've lived here?

Aiken: Well, I don't know really, it would be hard to say. I don't know whether, do you know about our fiesta that we have every year. It hasn't been too much in the last few years, I'm ashamed to say. But it started out being very interesting. I had seen every parade that they had. It started out by having a play and blessing of the flowers, fruits down at the mission, and we would have a play for several nights. And little food stands around and always a parade on the big Saturday of the parade. Which we still have the parade. We used to have, oh, movie stars and that was always a thrill to everyone and my oldest daughter was, I think about six weeks old when she went to her first fiesta parade. And we had movie stars like Robert Taylor, Barbara Stanwick, people like that who lived in the Valley would be in our parade, riding their horses. We still have a parade.

Dodson: Was the fiesta to celebrate anything in particular?

Aiken: The fiesta?

Dodson: Yes.

Aiken: To tell you quite frankly, I'm not sure. It was just in June and it was fiesta time.

Dodson: From what you say I gather they still have the parade but they don't do all of the things that once were a part of it?

Aiken: No. They don't have a play anymore and I don't know, it just doesn't seem like it used to be. They have places downtown and they have a carnival, which I think has spoiled the whole atmosphere of the fiesta, by having a carnival come in. To me it doesn't, it isn't a fiesta.

Dodson: What changes have taken place in the business district of the town since you have lived here? Are most of the old stores gone and new ones or does the town still have some of the original appearance of 1923?

Aiken: No. I think that the earthquake got most of that. Like the old Porter Hotel had a fire that destroyed it. And that was gone before

Aiken: the earthquake. The earthquake left us very little, believe me, of the older buildings. They're just gone.

Dodson: Were they damaged so badly that they had to be torn down after the quake?

Aiken: Well, some of them were, I understand, although I understand the old Elray Hotel was not damaged as badly but for some reason it didn't go up to the building code, and they tore it down. Which I think was a big shame because that was a real landmark of the place.

Dodson: Can you think offhand any buildings that survived the quake that would have historic value here in San Fernando?

Aiken: Well, the adobe down across from the post office. Down there on Maclay.

Dodson: Is that the Lopez adobe?

Aiken: Yes, the Lopez adobe. Other than that, even most of the old homes went down, many of the old homes that, you know, I knew people, the Hubbard's, the Maclay's and you know that were here in those days. All those homes are gone.

Kathy: The Hubbard's and the Maclay's. That's interesting. The street, the name Hubbard, is that a street too, or where have I heard of that?

Aiken: Yes.

Kathy: So did you know either of these families?

Aiken: Yes.

Kathy: Can you tell us anything about them?

Aiken: Not too much, no, really, it's been so long, I was too young. I knew a Mrs. Maclay and Mrs. Charles Maclay.

Dodson: Was that the wife of the senator who bought a considerable amount of land here in the northern part of the Valley?

Aiken: I'm not sure what the relationship was. There was a relationship, but I'm not sure what it was.

Kathy: Do they still have relatives living around here do you know?

Aiken: Not to my knowledge.

Kathy: Or the Hubbard's

Aiken: No. Not to my knowledge. They were quite elderly people when I was a child. So I really don't know.

Dodson: Do you know of any descendants of the pioneer families such as the Maclay's, Porter's and so on who might be still living in this area?

Aiken: Now I believe there are some Porter's that live over on Fourth Street or did. Now I don't know whether they still live there or not. They had a home over there. I couldn't be sure about that.

Dodson: But the earthquake did make a sort of clean sweep of those old houses that belonged to the original families?

Aiken: Oh yes, yes many of them. In fact, I can't think of any right now that are still standing, right off the bat. It's a shame, it really is.

Dodson: It certainly is. Well, how did the Lopez adobe manage to survive. Was it damaged? But came through otherwise fairly well?

Aiken: It seemed to come through fairly well. I believe it was damaged but I don't know to what extent. I really couldn't say.

Dodson: It was my understanding that the mission was fairly extensively damaged and was closed for a while for repairs.

Aiken: Yes. But like I say, I didn't go down there, I don't know. But I understood it was damaged quite a bit.

Dodson: Do you know about the Andres Pico adobe? Was that one much damaged?

Aiken: I really,

Dodson: That is the adobe which is about two blocks south of the mission on Sepulveda.

Aiken: Oh, well I was down there a few months ago and it seemed in beautiful shape. Now I don't know if it was damaged in the earthquake or not. I didn't tour the area down there. I don't know.

Dodson: Are you a member of the San Fernando Historical Association?

Aiken: No, I'm not. Believe it or not. No, I'm not.

Dodson: Can you tell us anything about any other recollections of the Valley that made a special impression on you since you've lived here?

Aiken: I don't know. I can't think of anything right off. I'll think of something tomorrow.

Dodson: I see. Kathy do you think of something that you would like to ask about?

Kathy: Offhand, no. I think that Mrs. Aiken is doing a very good job of covering alot of things.

Dodson: Do you have any school recollections that occur to you?

Aiken: Oh, many.

Dodson: Do you have one that occurs to you right off the bat when I say the word school that you would like to put on tape?

Aiken: Well, not right off. I always blame my bad start in school because my sister was my first grade teacher.

Dodson: I see.

Aiken: Kiddingly, of course.

Dodson: Was your sister considerably older than you are, then?

Aiken: Yes. Yes, she's nineteen years older than I. She was my first grade teacher. She taught at Morningside the first year. She's now a retired principal. She was a principal for many years in the Los Angeles City Schools.

Dodson: She is now retired?

Aiken: Yes.

Dodson: Does she live here in the Valley?

Aiken: No, she lives in Westwood in Thousand Oaks.

Dodson: Does anything about the sort of schools that existed then seem to you to contrast with the type that we have now, that you think they were better or worse or about the same?

Aiken: Well, scholastically, I don't know, really. I like to think that they were good if not better. I know kids don't have the attitude that we did.

Dodson: Now could you tell us just what the difference in that attitude was?

Aiken: Well, I know if we got a summons to go to the principals office that to us that was the end of the world. But today it doesn't seem to bother them. They think it is a big joke. And I don't know, I don't think it is good. I think that we should have a little respect for authority.

Dodson: Sometimes when I talk to students of the present time and tell them that in my day I can't imagine a single student ever used anything in the narcotic line, they are astonished. What would be your impression of the use of narcotics when you were a student?

Aiken: Never heard of it. The worst thing, that in those days, was somebody would be caught with a cigarette. Or a rumour that he had a drink the night before. About as bad as it could be. And that was bad.

Dodson: That's somewhat my recollections. What would you say about the difference in appearance of students. Do you see any difference in the way they dress now over the way they did then?

Aiken: I have quite a few grandchildren, I don't know whether I should say too much.

Dodson: Well, I think that this is a good time to say just what you think. I imagine you have some opinions on that subject.

Aiken: Oh, I do have alot of opinions on that because it seemed to me like we had a lot more self-respect and pride in our appearance than most of the kids now today. It was important to us to dress properly and to have our hair and nails done. That sort of thing. Especially when we were going to a party.

Dodson: What do you think about the long hairs and the beards and that sort of thing?

Aiken: Well, I think the important thing if they are going to have long hair, to keep it clean. That's my main thing about that. Beards they leave me cold. Very cold. I think they look like animals.

Dodson: How do you stand on miniskirts?

Aiken: I don't go much for them either. There isn't one girl in a hundred that looks right in them and if the other 99 wouldn't wear them it would be fine.

Dodson: Do you feel, then, that the girls dressed more attractively when you were in school than they do now?

Aiken: Well, that depends. I mean I think if a girl really looks well in that sort of thing, that's alright, but how many of them do? Really.

Dodson: Did many girls wear jeans to school in your day?

Aiken: No way. They would have been sent home. (click) That fast.

Dodson: Kathy, I think you might comment on that one way or the other.

Kathy: Well, no. I respected it for the time.

Dodson: Do we gather from that remark that you think it was alright for that time? But not this one?

Kathy: Well, no. I think if somebody feels comfortable in certain attire I think that is the way they should be.

Dodson: I see. Well do you care to say anything else about the difference in fashions in general, we have been confining it to schools but we could make this far more general than just schools.

Aiken: Well, the thing I think about when a girl goes out on a date, I think that she should look nice and I can't see a pair of dirty jeans and a sweatshirt is looking nice to go out on a date. Now I think I have nothing against capris, that's for sure. But she could be dressed a little nicer, you know. Have a little more pride in your appearance. Just so many of them don't. I mean it really hurts you to see them. Because here you find a beautiful girl and is going around like a slob.

Dodson: Do you feel then that as far as this Valley and American life in general is concerned, that people don't dress as well as they did say 30 years ago?

Aiken: No, I don't think they do. I don't think they have the pride and self-respect that we did in those days. I, maybe I'm old-fashioned, but when you go to a dress-up affair and you find someone in blue jeans and a sweatshirt or T-shirt or what have you, it just doesn't fit. You know, I mean when we went to, oh say a wedding, we would wear a hat and gloves and try to look nice you know. But you go to a wedding today and you find somebody in a pair of blue jeans and a T-shirt. I know, I just went to a couple.

Dodson: Well, now we have been discussing fashions or the lack thereof, in the Valley at the present time, what would be your impression on the, say crime in the Valley. How does it differ now from the way that it did say 30 or 40 years ago?

Aiken: We didn't seem to have too much crime. I don't know what the statistics say, but I know that we weren't aware of much that anything happened. It was always sound all over town, everyone would hear about it. I mean it was that unusual or seemed to be.

Dodson: Did you feel that it was safer, say to go out on the streets at night then than it is now?

Aiken: Oh, my mother and I used to walk to the show. We used to walk over at junior high at night and high school for our programs, and that sort of thing. I wouldn't think of doing it now.

Dodson: Then you feel there has been a definite deterioration in that respect?

Aiken: Oh, I think that there has been in the whole world. I really don't think it's any one place. I think it's the whole world. That we would never think anything about it and I know the stores used to stay open at night and my mother never learned to drive a car and I wasn't old enough, so we would walk down to town. And we would quite often go down in the afternoon late and have dinner and shop and walk home. Maybe stop at the show on the way home, who knows.

Dodson: I see, what would you say about differences in eating habits between the time that you were a child and now. Do you think that we have a greater variety of foods or that maybe we do but they are less nutritious. Is there any differences that you are conscientious of?

Aiken: Not too much. I eat about the same as I have always eaten and alot more convenience foods and that sort of thing. And your frozen foods are wonderful, particularly someone who lives alone you know. It's really a boon to them. But other than that I was a kid too. I know kids eat junk food. But they did when I was a kid too. I always said I got my fill of cokes when I was in high school that I got cured for life. It wasn't because I didn't drink, because I did. I'd have coke breaks instead of coffee breaks.

Dodson: One thing that you might see a difference in is in the state of the air - pollution. What do you think about that? With the passage of time?

Aiken: When I'm with those... It really doesn't bother me. I don't know whether over the years I have gradually built up an immunity to it or what but it really doesn't bother me. It really doesn't.

Dodson: Is this part of the Valley very subject to smog would you say?

Aiken: I wouldn't say we have that much, no, because I know when I used to go into Los Angeles that there was a certain spot that I could almost draw a picture where you would see the smog just at the one line and you hit that line and you were in Los Angeles.

Dodson: I see. Do you have any other recollections of anything along the line that I have been asking you about or anything else that you would like to mention?

Aiken: No. Not right now.

Dodson: Kathy can you think of something that I haven't hit that you would like to ask about?

Kathy: Other than fiesta. That they had here, do they have any other big celebrations like the 4th of July or anything that a community really...

Aiken: Fourth of July, yes. We used to have fireworks down at the park and afternoon programs in the park. And booths, you know, cold drinks that sort of thing. But they haven't had that for quite a few years. I always know organizations where we open a bottle of pop and so forth.

Dodson: It seems to me that that probably is a big change between American life as it existed some years ago and now. The 4th of July, particularly in small towns used to have speeches and band concerts and all sorts of things.

Aiken: Yes, they did and they had programs and this and that. Dancing schools and all that sort of thing. But most people would take a picnic possibly and wait for the fireworks.

Dodson: Would you say that people were perhaps closer together in those days with that type of community enterprise than they are now, where they are more apt to spend the time looking at television or listening to radio or something like that?

Aiken: Well, it seemed to me like I had a closer association with my friends in those days than I do now. I don't know whether I was more active or what, but it seemed, I don't know it just seemed different.

Dodson: Do you feel that maybe we lost something by discontinuing these community things that brought people together?

Aiken: Oh definitely. Just like our fiesta, it is too commercial right now. I know they were losing money on it that is why they had to quit having the play and that sort of thing. But brining a carnival in takes the whole idea away. I mean there is nothing fiesta about a carnival ride. I know kids like them, that sort but personally I don't care for them that much.

Dodson: Was there any difference in the celebration of Christmas in the Valley when you were a child over the way it is now?

Aiken: No, I don't believe so. We always, we still very much celebrate it the same as we did then.

Dodson: I just wondered if there were more plays given by the churches than there used to be in some towns the giving out of candy to the little kids and all that. Is that still done?

Aiken: Well, I believe the Elks Club still has the Christmas program for the children. I haven't been for several years but I used to take my grandchildren. And they would have clown, magic show, this that and the other. And Santa Claus would give out candy and a sock full of candy and I don't know about the churches. I haven't heard of any place for a long time at Christmas time. It's a shame it is a nice thing I think.

Dodson: Since we mentioned Christmas, that reminds me of the churches. Can you tell us whether there are any old churches in San Fernando, other than the mission itself?

Aiken: No, I can't. Because the old Methodist church is gone, the, no I can't think of any, really. The Methodist church was on the corner of 3rd and Maclay. When they built the new church after a while it was torn down. And the social hall in the back has been resold and some other organization has it now. The last I know it was still standing. The rock building. Other than that I really don't know of any church that was still standing.

Dodson: I see, I had heard that there was one old Catholic church standing. There is a new Catholic church in San Fernando, isn't there?

Aiken: Yes.

Dodson: Is there an old one which was in use before that standing some blocks away from the new one? Or do you recall?

Aiken: I don't know, I couldn't tell you.

Dodson: I see. I'm not quite sure myself. I just wondered. I had heard there might be.

Aiken: Well, there are two Catholic churches down there. Santa Rosa, I believe and St. Ferdinans. The one is mostly Chicano, I understand Santa Rosa and St. Ferdinan is, they are both, you know everyone, I don't know really.

Dodson: I see. Well, I don't know whether I can think of anything else to ask you about right off the bat. Kathy have you thought of something else that you would like to ask about?

Kathy: I do, but I forgot what it was.

Dodson: Well, maybe if I hadn't talked so much you wouldn't have forgot.

Kathy: Oh, I don't know. It was a good question.

Dodson: I'm sure it was.

Kathy: Why don't you think of something while I'm think of something.

Dodson: Mrs. Aiken, do...

Kathy: Oh, I remember what it was. Do you ever remember it snowing here in San Fernando?

Aiken: Oh yes. In fact the last time that it snowed was about a little over 14 years ago. I know why because my youngest daughter hadn't had her twins yet and she went out in the front yard and built a snowman and about a couple months later she had twins. And they are now 14 years old.

Kathy: How deep was this snow?

Aiken: Probably an inch or two is all, but it was enough, we got a snow-man made. Yes, we have had several times. It isn't an every winter affair but I think about 3 or 4 times since I have been here.

Dodson: Well, I guess that's about all then that any of us can think of at the moment.

Aiken: You'll think of it all tomorrow...

Transcribed from a taped interview with Mrs. Mildred Aiken of San Fernando. The interview was conducted by Dr. James L. Dodson, Curator of Los Angeles Valley College Historical Museum, and Miss Kathryn Burmeister, museum aide. The interview took place at the home of Mrs. Aiken on March 15, 1976.